

## OUTLOOK FOR THE 2006 MISSOURI SEASON

Hunter expectations will no doubt be high going into the 2006-07 waterfowl season with duck numbers up 9% and May ponds up 26% from their long-term averages. Hunters will have opportunity to take advantage of a 16-day teal season for the first time since 2003, a 60-day duck season for the 10<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, the Conservation Order for the 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive year, and more late season Canada goose hunting days in recent history. For the first time since 2002 hunters will not have to contend with a “season within a season” for either pintails or canvasbacks.

However, the outlook for Missouri hunters depends on more than high numbers of ducks on the breeding grounds. In Missouri, weather, habitat, and migration timing will have a greater impact on the season in Missouri than the size of the fall flight. Missouri hunters have experienced some of their best hunting when early predictions were poor and some of the worst seasons when duck numbers were up. Although conditions could change by fall, as of early August, significant precipitation is needed to ensure favorable habitat conditions in Missouri. Timely rains have maintained crop production and moist-soil plant development, but topsoil moisture remains low. Continued lack of precipitation could also affect water management capabilities on public and private wetlands. The Missouri River navigation season is scheduled to end 44 days earlier than normal due to low reservoir levels in the Dakotas. If rains in Missouri do not maintain fall river levels, this could result in reduced pumping capabilities at public (Bob Brown CA, Grand Pass CA, and Eagle Bluffs) and private wetlands along the Missouri River. Regardless of needed improvements in habitat conditions, Missouri hunters will once again have a 60-day duck season and a nearly 80-day Canada goose season from which to select their hunting days. Season dates should continue to provide the opportunity for a variety of hunting styles, including early and late season hunting preferences.

